



Garden of the Gods Resort and Club

by Lisa Perry

Stunning landscape meets a welcoming wellness retreat at Garden of the Gods Resort and Club

Garden of the Gods ... a beer garden? Native Americans considered the site peaceful and sacred, and the area was a beacon for pioneer wellness seekers. But in 1859, two visiting surveyors were awed simply by the stunning sight of towering red rocks framed by Pike's Peak. When one spontaneously commented that it was the perfect spot for a beer garden, his companion immediately countered, calling it "fit for the gods to assemble." And then he christened it



accordingly. In 1951, founders Al and Margaret Hill were able to skillfully integrate luxurious amenities into the striking environment to create a welcoming retreat: Garden of the Gods Resort and Club in Colorado Springs.

"Walt Disney, Gene Autry and John Wayne used to come here back in the day, and when you walk into the hotel you get a feeling of that rich tapestry of history here," says president and CEO James Gibson. "Certainly it's important to pay homage to that legacy—but also evolve into a wellness destination. It is such a magical place."

The cornerstone of the resort's wellness mission is embodied by Strata Integrated Wellness Spa: 31,000 square feet of treatments and services available to the general public, as well as guests and club members. Strata's medical director, Dr. Michael Barber, says, "Our vision is to allow a person to come to the Garden of the Gods Resort and Club, spend three or four days—some devoted to their wellness, some to just luxuriate in the spa, some to golf or experience the area—and integrate all of that together. Not only can Strata stand alone, we're an adjunct to what the resort offers: an escape and an opportunity for people to recharge and be well."



Barber is a cardiologist who embraces both traditional medicine and innovative treatments, often in tandem. “I take a very personal interest in each client that comes to my attention and try to customize and to personalize, and not have a one-size-fits-all,” he says. His expertise covers services from executive wellness to a complete cardiovascular evaluation. Staff members have a loyal following—especially Barber and chiropractic doctor Shane Wells, skilled far beyond functional realignments to more

intricate injury-pattern work. Strata’s popular clinical services also include acupuncture, mindfulness, energy work, nutrition, medical massage and fitness. “Basically you name an aspect of wellness and we can put something together for you.”

Barber adds, “We have a very devout following from our cancer patients. We embrace clients that are struggling with aspects of cancer that we can provide a holistic and comprehensive approach” in treating.

Rejuvenation services at Strata include the memorable Pure Sense Soft Pack bed, where clients float weightlessly, cocooned by body-temperature warmth, designed to reduce mental and physical stress, and add the benefits of many hours of sleep in only one hour. Barber also talks about Strata’s popular couple’s massage, with the option to linger and indulge in champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries. The Himalayan salt sauna is a place where medical results can mix with relaxation benefits. Barber says mindfulness sessions are available for anyone, but becoming popular with golfers to help with their mental game. Strata’s first-class pampering and beauty services run the gamut, including facials that elicit “best I’ve ever had” customer feedback.

Gibson says the goal is to bring wellness into every aspect of the resort, even with something as basic as menus. “There are selections on the menus that allow people to choose healthy things if they wish ... and have a great porterhouse steak and a great cabernet bottle of wine if they want. If that’s wellness to you, then go ahead and indulge and enjoy.” He’s convinced too that the nature-focused atmosphere of the views and deer and bunnies roaming the property also contribute to overall wellness.



Although it’s ranked No. 1 out of 111 Colorado Springs hotels on Trip Advisor, someone told Gibson the resort may be a best-kept secret. “Because we’re more than 50 years old and only fairly recently opened up to become a full-service resort, there are still a lot of people who don’t know us,” he says. “We’re trying to change the perception. There’s a great facility and resort here that you can come and enjoy, and it’s very, very special.” Hotel rooms all face west to access the stunning views, and home-like luxury cottages and casitas are available for short-term stays as well.

“When first built it was very much an invitation-only private club,” Gibson says. “We transitioned through time and have become an open club. There’s no membership committee, and you don’t have to be sponsored by a member. We encourage anybody to come and join us.” Guests and members alike comment on feeling welcomed, and enjoy being greeted by name among staff members.



Multiple onsite dining options offer choices all day long, from casual patio fare to a full-service formal dining room. Daniel Daughtry, vice president of restaurant, bars and events, recommends the braised lamb shank at Grand View Dining Room, and handmade buttermilk-fried chicken at Kissing Camels Grille.

Rich Parker, director of golf, says the 27 holes at Kissing Camels provide “spectacular views and breathtaking vistas,

but it is very much player-friendly—three different 9-hole courses have just about everything most golfers could ask for. Every hole has a unique character and amazing views. No matter what skill level they may be, all golfers leave in amazement, regardless of how well they’ve played.” Guests also enjoy two outdoor and four indoor tennis courts, along with pickleball, and can choose from among three stylish, distinctive outdoor swimming pools.

No surprise, the resort hosts around 60 weddings per year, and Gibson talks about fathers escorting brides with smiles and happy tears on the emerald-colored lawn with dramatic scenery. The general public can also put together functions and meetings with the option to incorporate golf and wellness activities. Groups might utilize up to 100 hotel rooms over multiple days, or host a one-day gathering for up to 200 people, allowing more staff attention and a personalized experience.

Some love the Garden of the Gods Resort experience so much they choose to live it full-time in the Vermillion residential community. One builder presides over new residences that are approximately 5,000 square feet. “The design and quality are outstanding, right on the mesa, where you have 100 percent access to these wonderful views,” says Gibson. Home ownership comes with a complimentary family golf membership, concierge services, and a slew of by-request opportunities that include a private chef and staff for home parties. “It’s a gated community,” says Gibson, “a lock-and-leave, low-maintenance lifestyle. Most of the people have been sold to full-time residents. So there’s certainly a feeling of a community within the community of people feeling really connected to their neighbors and having a beautiful place to live—a beautiful way to live.”



Barber says, “We encourage people to come here to really unplug. Everything should be focused on getting the most benefit that they possibly can. Essentially anything that anybody can dream of, that they might want to have happen ... we can accommodate you.”

The Details

Garden of the Gods Resort and Club

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Lisa Perry has been writing about people, places and fun things to do in Colorado for more than 25 years. Garden of the Gods Park has been a favorite day trip, but extending that into a relaxing resort stay sounds like a plan.